

REMARKS

Initially, Applicants express appreciation to the Examiner for the detailed Official Action provided. Furthermore, Applicants express appreciation to the Examiner for acknowledgment that the drawings are acceptable, for the acknowledgment of Applicants' Claim for Priority and Receipt of the certified copies of the priority documents, and for the acknowledgment of Applicants' Information Disclosure Statements (IDSs) filed on April 6, 2006, July 19, 2007, and November 6, 2007.

Additionally, Applicants express appreciation to the Examiner for the indication on pages 15-16 of the outstanding Official Action that dependent claim 17 contains allowable subject matter.

Upon entry of the present paper, claims 3 and 18-19 will have been amended and claims 1-2, 4-17, and 20-22 will have been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter thereof. The herein-contained amendments should not be considered an indication of Applicants' acquiescence as to the propriety of the outstanding rejection. Rather, Applicants have amended the claims in order to advance prosecution and obtain early allowance of the claims in the present application. Additionally, Applicants reserve the right to file a continuing application directed to the subject matter of the canceled claims. Thus, upon entry of the present paper, claims 3 and 18-19 are pending in the present application, with claims 3 and 19 being in independent form.

Applicants address the objection and rejections provided within the Official Action below and respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the outstanding rejections pending in the present application together with an indication of the allowability of claims 3 and 18-19 (*i.e.*, all pending claims) in the next Official

communication. Such action is respectfully requested and is now believed to be appropriate for at least the reasons provided below.

Objections to the Claims

On pages 15-16 of the outstanding Official Action, the Examiner indicated that dependent claim 17 contains allowable subject matter. In this regard, claim 17 was objected to as being dependent on a rejected base claim, but was otherwise indicated to be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim (*i.e.*, claim 3) and any intervening claims (*i.e.*, claims 16).

By the present paper, without acquiescing in the propriety of the objection and solely to expedite prosecution of the application to allowance, Applicants have cancelled claim 17 (and amended independent claims 1 and 19 to incorporate the subject matter of claim 17 and intervening claim 16). Thus, Applicants believe that the grounds for the objection to claim 17 are moot, and thus, request withdrawal of the objection.

35 U.S.C. § 103 Claim Rejections

In the outstanding Official Action, claims 1-3, 13-15, 19, and 22 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Pat. Appl. Pub. No. 2002/0047575 to Iwami (hereinafter "IWAMI") in view of U.S. Pat. Appl. Pub. No. 2001/0024179 to Nakamura (hereinafter "NAKAMURA").

Additionally, claims 4-12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over IWAMI and NAKAMURA in view of U.S. Pat. No. 7,212,194 to Nagaoka (hereinafter "NAGAOKA").

Lastly, claims 16, 18, 20, and 21 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over IWAMI and NAKAMURA in view of U.S. Pat. Appl. Pub. No. 2005/0082957 to Hoppenbrouwers et al. (hereinafter “HOPPENBROUWERS”).

As previously noted, by the present paper and without acquiescing in the propriety of the outstanding rejection, Applicants have amended independent claims 3 and 19 (*i.e.*, all pending independent claims) to incorporate the indicated allowable subject matter of dependent claim 17 and intervening claim 16 and have cancelled claims 1-2, 4-17, and 20-22. Furthermore, Applicants note that claim 18 (*i.e.*, the only other pending claim) has been amended to depend from independent claim 3.

Accordingly, in view of the above and based at least on the Examiner’s indication that claim 17 contains allowable subject matter, Applicants respectfully traverse the outstanding rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103 and submit that all pending claims (*i.e.*, claims 3 and 18-19) meet the requirements for patentability. Thus, the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the 35 U.S.C. § 103 rejections and to indicate the allowance of each and every pending claim in the present application.

CONCLUSION

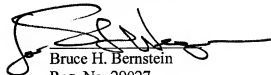
In view of the fact that none of the art of record, whether considered alone, or in any proper combination thereof, discloses or renders obvious the present invention as now defined by the pending claims, and in further view of the above amendments and remarks, reconsideration of the Examiner's action and allowance of the present application are respectfully requested and are believed to be appropriate.

Applicants note that this amendment is being made to advance prosecution of the application to allowance, and should not be considered as surrendering equivalents of the territory between the claims prior to the present amendment and the amended claims. Further, no acquiescence as to the propriety of the Examiner's rejection is made by the present amendment. All amendments to the claims which have been made in this amendment, and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

Should the Commissioner determine that an extension of time is required in order to render this response timely and/or complete, a formal request for an extension of time, under 37 C.F.R. §1.136(a), is herewith made in an amount equal to the time period required to render this response timely and/or complete. The Commissioner is authorized to charge any required extension of time fee under 37 C.F.R. §1.17 to Deposit Account No. 19-0089.

If there should be any questions concerning this application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,
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